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RANK AND NOBILITY.

A STORY—BY JEANNE MARIE.

Translated for the REVUE, by Dr. Edwin A. Atlee.

[CONTINUED.]

In oppressive anxiety the Count left the house of death. The last words of Lorenz, awakened fearful doubts in him.

"Impossible, impossible!" cried he, aloud. "It was he!—and yet what else could it be!—but could he have been so cruel? The child died at that time; yet perhaps killed it, and gave me a strange one. And Erika, my beloved Erika—the chief of my thoughts, my pride my happiness—No, it cannot be; mere momentary imaginings. But Kate—her dependency, her anxiety, her tears—

And these torturing doubts the Count renewed the palace. He wished now to see no one, to speak with no one. Gladly would he have gone back to Catherine, once more to prevail upon her to give him the truth of his fearful forebodings. Still it was a renewed comfort to him to be able, for a moment at least, to hold fast to the delusion.

Frederic came to meet him. "I have unlocked the saloon, and had a fire made below," said the old servant.

When Eiseheim entered the apartment, everything there reminded him of Erika. Here, where she had played—when a maiden, but when a child, she would in future act and manage. He observed a large wall-papering over the sofa. The beautifully-painted female looked down upon him so calmly, that the sight of her arrested him.

"Forgive, Clotilde," said he, softly, "if I have lived so long, and yet so dearly, but should I not yet find our own Erika shall never want, never be inferior—shall even be the first place in my heart?"

Eiseheim felt on this point like Baler, but altogether differently.

Pursued by restlessness, the Count again left the palace. He could not bear to be in a room where he had to meet the accusing look of a mother, robbed even in death, and the remembrance of a spurious daughter. When about half way to the house of death, the person met him. Catherine, relieved by Lorenz's death from the command of silence, had confessed her guilt, and to the old, annihilating stroke, the young man, with arms folded, stood motionless before the picture of the Countess, and heard not the person coming in, who stood for a little time silent. Edmund then opened his lips, and as if speaking aloud in a dream, said:

"This is herself, not to be mistaken—feature for feature."

"Who?" asked the Count, laying his hand on Edmund's shoulder.

"My sister," said he, looking into the Count's inquiring face. Eiseheim started.

"Your family live in this neighborhood?"

"My father was a preacher at the Duke's, in Reichelsfeld."

The Count sank into sad musings, and the meal was taken in silence.

Days passed without obtaining any explanation from which Edmund might have known the pressure of painful recollections, worked in the gallery of paintings in the palace; and the Count's mind was harassed to connect the links of a chain that might lead to the lost child; when one evening a letter came from Adrian, that put an end to all ambiguity, and determined the Count and Edmund to depart that very hour.

AT THE DEATH-BED.

Mrs. Muller, exhausted under the burden of her cross was broken down. Six days had she suffered with feverish dreams; and from moment to moment the state of her morbid excitement was exacerbated. It was not in the least remarkable that in her phantasies she should mention her son, Count Sternhof; that she should accuse herself as his murderer, and mourn over him as dead. People knew of the gloom which bore down her, and the duel that followed; and even had nothing been known to explain this wonderful interview, it would, notwithstanding have been quite natural for this appalling scene to be interwoven in the feverish dreams of the patient. The clearest traces of her therefore accounted the delirium of the brain, and even for frenzied imagining. The physician, at least, believed that the Count, who alternately with Adrian, watched the sick-bed. These last only began to see with clearness through the dimmed eyes of her who had suffered tedious martyrdom.

When she had a brief interval, she called Adrian to her bedside, and asked him about Sternhof. The sorrowful sigh which accompanied her disease; and the young preceptor himself went daily to know the condition of the wounded man.

Hypolith for a day or two seemed more satisfied, as if he had needed some satisfaction to cool his blood. He went about more and more cheerful, his acquaintances whom he met, he spoke to as formerly, opposite Lucie's window, and wearing himself in looking up at the dimly-lighted panes.

Lucie lived out this time in solitude; and never did it appear so interesting to her as now, when he was the channel through which she obtained the news of the progress of Mrs. Muller's illness with the same sympathy that Seraphine felt for that of Sternhof.

Meanwhile Adrian prepared for his union with Lucie, and only waited Edmund's coming, when he would be the witness of the festive act; when the situation of his mother had been the greatest solicitude, and he already heard the wing of the angel of death fluttering over her, dissipated this intention.

"Lucie," said he to his bride, "mother is dying. This evening the clergyman comes to administer the holy ordinance of the Last Supper, and to gather us round her death-bed."

Lucie said not a word, having ability neither to think nor to act, and yielded mechanically to Adrian's arrangements.

Evening came, and with it the clergyman. The lights burned dimly behind a screen. A only interrupted by the intermitted respirations of the patient. Lucie, undisturbed, with weeping eyes and care-worn countenance, knelt at the foot of the bed.

"Have mercy, my God, have mercy," she whispered, "take me hence in thy stead."

At this moment were heard loud voices and approaching steps.

Hypolith! exclaimed Lucie; and immediately the door was burst open.

"Let me in!" cried the Prince, rushing in. "This moment must decide to whom she

shall belong. To me, I say!" And with drawn sword the young man stood before his friend.

Adrian went to meet him. "Hypolith," said he, with tremulous voice, "my mother is dying. What brings you here?"

The Prince, subdued by the spiritual ascendancy of Adrian, looked him steadily in the face; then said, as if in passing—

"I also wish, and so does Lucie, that we may die."

Two persons now entered the chamber, and Edmund thrust himself beside his sister, at his mother's bed. She looked with a faint smile on her youngest son, but appeared not to remember him. Hypolith stared, motionless on the group. Count Eiseheim went up to Adrian, and whispering gently, both went into an adjoining room.

An hour afterwards, the Count stood with his daughter, arm in arm, between the sons of Lucie's foster-mother, by her corpse.

"Oh, had she been able to take with her the delusion," said he, "for she loved my child as if it had been her own."

Hypolith, not being able to bear the sufferings of the chamber and the astounding intelligence, revolved it as he went through the streets of the city into the free air, and remained during the night in restless agitation.

A BETROTHMENT.

Count Sternhof sat in a commodious arm-chair, still carrying his arm in a sling, and a twitch of pain passed across his handsome face.

And this time, however, a man, and journals lay before him on the stand, but he seemed to pay no attention to them, though he waited patiently. From time to time he looked at his watch, and impatiently murmured, "The parade is over some time ago. I wish he would come; his tattle diverts me." This wish was fulfilled, since the person longed for came in, and the Count's eyes brightened up.

"Good morning, Glöben, glorious that thou hast come! I am wearied almost to death. Dost thou bring any news?" asked he.

"News only," cried the Baron, laughing. "Wonderful, most wonderful histories. And first of all I must ask thee, if thou art strong enough to bear a most astounding surprise?"

"Only to it!" cried Baler, pleased at being roused from his apathy. "To it, my good Glöben."

"Now for the most important first," said Glöben, erecting himself. "Mrs. Muller is dead!" Baler colored up. This information, communicated so unexpectedly in a manner, had somewhat alarming in it, and made him tremble. Glöben, who noticed it humorously said, "If thou art frightened already, I had better not proceed. Above all, your meeting, I mean time with the Prince, and the demands before Mrs. Muller's door, which even now I cannot comprehend, since I never before knew thee to have acted so adventurously at such a critical moment. A portentous fright, and laid the foundation of a nervous fever. For thou hadst in a measure so entwined thyself into her phantasies, that she called thee her son, her beloved child. However—let us stay. Something new comes to me, and I must tell thee of my eyes. Thou wast in her house before we met thee on—street, where thou positively refused to speak out and behaved so mysteriously. Thou mayst well remember it, and that thy resemblance to the preacher is striking."

"I beg thee, Glöben," said Baler, again collecting himself, "let us have no conjectures. I did not know the woman at all, and she knew me as little. And now come to something else. Thou saidst, a little while ago, that thou hadst quite a wonderful history for me; I am eager to hear it."

"Then hear. Just at the most solemn moment of the union of the betrothed pair, the Prince rushed in like a madman to stab the bride, and I know not how many more. Thou knowest his blind passion, for thou art still laboring under its consequences. Now, therefore, the young man, who was moving off, and the country girl, who was his betrothed, were both of them, and now, first, Hypolith notices the dying woman. He is disarmed. Then just as he was about to leave, the Countess, with the painter. The father of the foundling is discovered. The unfortunate preacher's daughter suddenly appears, and at the corpse of Mrs. Muller the festival of acknowledgment comes to pass. How all hangs together I have not yet been able to learn, but so much is certain: that Erika, the proud, overbearing Countess, who ridicules us all, and at whose feet thou hast languished so long, was once the betrothed of the Count's son, who was named upon the cunning Count by his own cunning tenant."

"This truly is news of the highest importance," said Baler, with a forced smile. "But it pleases me that my conjectures have been confirmed. Thou hast asserted, it is true, that I have gratuitously laughed at Erika's fate; nevertheless, I must tell thee this was by no means the case. If she pleased me for a moment, the charm of novelty alone attracted me. I too soon discovered in her—I may now confidently say—something rustic in her character, that, affected my delicacy, and was repulsive. And I thought it cannot be excepted thee, what lady should thus engage my attention?"

Glöben played the ignorant, and with a laugh said, "Thou mayst be forever glad, therefore, that when the charm of novelty first enchained thee, thou didst not suffer thyself to be so easily lulled."

"That never entered my mind," affirmed Baler.

"But now farewell," cried Glöben; "I have more visits to make, to tell the news in other places."

"It will excite universally a pleasant sensation," Erika was not at all behind," answered Baler. "But where is she now?"

"Will she remove to her parents in the farm house?"

"That I do not know; but so much is certain, that as soon as Mrs. Muller is buried, the Count with both his daughters will return to Eschen."

Baler, when alone, was assailed by a complication of feelings. His mother was dead. Was not this the same as if he was free? And could he not under these circumstances rejoice in the liberty he so ardently desired? All these considerations, however, were soon rejected, and his mother's love, in which he had so long been filled, and his heart with grief and bitterness, passed through his mind. He might have made amends, but it was now too late. Her last piercing shriek sounded in his ears. His coldness, his falsehood, extorted it; and by the stab which he had so long rejected, he pierced her heart, she died, slowly bleeding to exhaustion. "But I could not do otherwise," sighed he; and quieting and deceiving himself with this excuse, his thoughts flitted from the death view to another object that gave him no less pain. Who had the hardihood, for mere prejudice, to let a mother die, had been less painful to see for the favor of a woman from the lowest class of society. 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